

VZCZCXRO0253
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHNEH RUEHPW
DE RUEHKA #0790/01 2240357
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 120357Z AUG 09
FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9296
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0041
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0043
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0024
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 0034
RHHJJPI/PACOM IDHS HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 000790

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/INSB AND S/GWI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/12/2019

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ELAB](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: NOBEL LAUREATE MOHAMMAD YUNUS FACES CHALLENGES AT
HOME AS HE PREPARES TO RECEIVE PRESIDENTIAL MEDAL OF FREEDOM

REF: DHAKA 469

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) The Ambassador met with Nobel Laureate Mohammad Yunus August 9 to congratulate him on winning the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Yunus said he was honored to have been chosen and highlighted his success in replicating his foundation Grameen in several Latin American countries, most notably Guatemala. The Nobel Laureate reported that tensions between him and the Prime Minister continued, but he hoped to meet with her soon to clear any misunderstandings. Yunus also wants to help Bangladeshi workers at risk of becoming trafficking in person (TIP) victims.

Expanding the Grameen Foundation

2. (SBU) The Ambassador congratulated Nobel laureate Mohammad Yunus on his selection for the Presidential Medal of Freedom during an August 9 meeting. Yunus told the Ambassador he was honored and excited to receive the award. Yunus was pleased with his success in establishing the Grameen foundation in Mexico, Columbia, and Guatemala. Yunus noted that 14,000 individuals in Guatemala had already benefited from microcredit loans. Yunus said he was interested in providing microcredit loans in Haiti, but was still awaiting a formal invitation from the GOH. (Note: During a meeting in Washington earlier this year, the Secretary asked Yunus to consider working in Haiti).

Tension with Prime Minister Continues

3. (C) Yunus said tensions with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina continued (reftel) and complicated Grameen's efforts to work with her government's officials. Yunus perceived that even supportive government officials felt pressured to distance themselves from his recommendations and proposals. Yunus said he wanted to resolve whatever "misunderstanding" existed with the Prime Minister regarding his efforts and organization. Yunus said he had not yet received an appointment with the Prime Minister despite his sending in an urgent request in late July. The Ambassador pledged to continue to encourage PM Sheik Hasina to meet Yunus. (Note: Since the Ambassador's last meeting with Yunus, the Embassy has repeatedly urged the PM's advisers to bury the hatchet with the Grameen Founder).

Trafficking in Persons (TIP) on Yunus' radar

14. (SBU) Yunus expressed interest in Trafficking in Persons (TIP) and the recent decision to place Bangladesh on the Tier 2 TIP Watchlist. Yunus said he wanted to set up a unit called "Grameen Employment" which would assist at risk Bangladeshi workers and mitigate some of the factors that make them vulnerable to trafficking. He said Grameen offices initially in Dhaka and Chittagong, would help workers find jobs overseas while ensuring employers honored contracts and respected workers' rights. He noted that he was awaiting permission from the government to set up the overseas employment scheme. The Ambassador noted that the Philippines government protected and managed its overseas labor force well and might be a useful role model.

Comment

15. (C) Professor Yunus' selection for the Presidential Medal of Freedom was widely hailed in Bangladesh. We have worked closely with Grameen to publicize the award and highlight the important work Yunus and his colleagues have done. The rivalry between Yunus and the Prime Minister is damaging both to Grameen and the GOB. Also unnecessarily complicating our efforts to promote U.S. interests in Bangladesh and beyond. We will continue to urge both sides to clear up past misunderstandings and focus on larger shared goals.

DHAKA 00000790 002 OF 002

MORIARTY